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AUTHOR Schwabe, Tippy
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ABSTRACT

The academic skills that students of English as a second language (ESL) require to survive in American educational institutions are identified, and ways of incorporating the skills into ESL classes or programs are suggested. The following academic skills are important to ESL students: (1) ability to take notes of lectures and textual materials; (2) ability to organize essay type examination questions and write accurately under the pressure of time; (3) ability to recognize and understand the thinking strategies implicit in objective type test questions; (4) ability to read at varying rates with high level comprehension; and (5) the ability to research and write a reference paper. Instruction can be individualized or in a group, but the skills should be introduced as systematically as possible. By using a syllabus, a teacher can proceed in structuring class lessons and activities as best fits each group of students. A procedure for teaching note taking is presented that is designed to help in outlining and in differentiating main divisions and ideas from supporting details. Each of the survival skills is introduced to the students, integrated with assigned texts, and reinforced through practice during the term. A formal outline pattern and a list of some useful materials for academic skills development classes and programs are appended. (SW)

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SURVIVAL ENGLISH FOR ESL STUDENTS IN AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Tippy Schwabe
University of California, Davis

While "survival skills" for ESL students are usually thought of as managing the practicalities of daily life in the community in which the students are residing, this term can certainly be expanded to include the skills ESL students who are (or will be) studying in an American college or university need in order to survive academically in the U.S.A. These skills may also constitute, at least in part, the substance of some English for Special Purposes classes. But whatever name is given them, without question they are essential to the life of students performing academically and must be identified and taught as such by ESL teachers who are working with students struggling to survive in American educational institutions. Identifying these skills and suggesting ways to incorporate the teaching of them into ESL classes or programs is the subject of this paper.

Survival English, of course, is taught situationally. This means that the traditional language skills of vocabulary acquisition, control of syntax, composition, etc. are not the primary focus of lessons. Rather, these critical elements of language acquisition are obliquely incorporated into lessons and taught through specific situations. In an academic survival skills class, language is taught through academic skills.

If this is done, several positive things happen. First, the immediate needs of the students are specifically addressed. This does wonders for student motivation. Part of a turn-about in interest and attentiveness links, in addition to needs being met, to being liberated from the too-usual concept of an ESL class being a "remedial English" class or a repeat of prior English classes when there's so much ("too much") else to study in the major academic field. Another benefit of an academic skills approach is its appeal to school administrators, who often find more support for this kind of language acquisition, since even some native-English-speaking students have not fully controlled these skills by the time they enter college.

So, what are the academic skills necessary for an ESL student to survive in an American college or university, and how can they be taught? The skills themselves are easily identifiable:

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1. Ability to take notes in lectures
2. Ability to take notes on written, textual materials
3. Ability to organize essay type examination questions and write accurately under the pressure of time
4. Ability to recognize and understand the thinking strategies implicit in objective type test questions

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A slightly different version of this paper was presented at the CATESOL Conference in San Diego, California, March, 1977.

5. Ability to read at varying rates with high level comprehension

6. Ability to research and write a reference paper, which, in turn, necessitates the

   a. Ability to use the local library and reference tools
   b. Ability to summarize and paraphrase (to avoid plagarism)

In one way or another, many ESL teachers have been at work for some time in teaching these skills, at least to advanced-level academically-bound or arrived students. Concurrently, Learning Assistance Centers and tutoring programs have sprung up to develop these skills further in native and bilingual speakers of English students. By this time, all who have been involved in such teaching programs know that it is not enough to label these skills and tell the students that mastering them is what is necessary for their survival. Doing only this is like teaching about the language rather than teaching the language. Still students, and sometimes even teachers, occasionally need to be reminded that these sets of "abilities" are habits which, like all habits/skills, are learned only through participatory repetition. Thus ESL programs or classes which aim to teach student survival skills must structure into the syllabus continuous activities to develop these abilities.

Whether to do this during class time with students in a group, to individualize programs for students in laboratory-type situations, or to do a combination depends in large part on the type of students in the ESL program. If the students have been in the USA for a length of time and have had considerable experience in doing individualized work, a contract type of program in a Learning Center will probably work very well. However, with students who are new to the academic expectations of American colleges and universities and are also new to working without considerable teacher control or guidance, substantial work must be done in classroom situations. Eventually, part of the in-class training must include weaning the student from dependence upon the teacher to individual use of self-programmed materials, but this cannot be expected too early in the student's experience. Even with graduate level students, much supervised attention is necessary before the students are ready to proceed entirely on their own.

Whatever the approach, however, there is some pedagogical commonality in framing the lessons or curriculum. First, the student's learning and progress should be guided, but not graded. Fear of a grade can reduce learning substantially. Furthermore, idiosyncratic learning behaviors should be respected. Not grading, however, does not rule out modeling a right or possible answer. This should always be provided for self-checking.

It is important, too, that skills be introduced as systematically as possible depending upon which are most essential. It often seems that all skills are needed immediately, but not all can be taught at once. So the instructor must select and point out the overlapping skills which students soon come to understand, for eventually a skill worked on in one context will be essential to another skill in another context. (Students' anxiety about progress or sequencing can sometimes be allayed by pointing this out.) Concommitant with this is the need in the teaching of each skill to analyze for component elements. Students need to know the parts of the whole they are working on; further, it is a help to recognize that they've already mastered part of a new skill.

This, in turn, recommends giving some time in each class period, in the hour spent in the individualized program, to working on two or three skills rather than spending an entire period on one skill. This increases the students' understanding of the relatedness of the academic survival skills as well as keeping each learning session faster moving and more likely to be interesting.

How to go about all of this? An explicit syllabus for the sequencing of the presentation and teaching of academic skills has been followed successfully for several terms in the first ESL class offered to newly-arrived students on the University of California, Davis campus.[1] Both undergraduate and graduate level students with varying language levels and language backgrounds, constitute this beginning class each quarter, and all follow the work outlined.

The texts (listed in Appendix 2) have been chosen for these particular students' needs, but other texts can easily be substituted for students functioning on different levels of academic competition and expectation. Basic study skills (outlining, note-taking, summarizing), basic research paper procedure (library tour, research paper topic, research paper organization), and basic essay writing skills are explicitly taught in the three-hour weekly class periods. However, students are given assignments in specific reading skills, sentence skills, punctuation, and vocabulary outside of the class periods. Because of the varying levels of language in the class, making these assignments out-of-class work is reasonable since some students already have control of these elements and need only to review them. However, each student is assigned an American student "tutor" for a once-a-week meeting, so the ESL student can ask for individual help on any material he feels he needs explanation of. Also, there are small group classes treating grammar, vocabulary, etc. in the ESL Clinic where students can go for more review or practice. While not all ESL classes elsewhere might have this adjunct help, in intensive programs other classes could augment the skill work in these columns in the order suggested in the weekly syllabus. In other classes, skill contracts might be written for the students to do in laboratory-type sessions or as homework to review and practice these language elements.

Study Skill Contracts, in fact, provide some of the required practice work in the specific skill areas after initial presentation in class. Because of the level of the UCD students, they are required to spend only a half-hour a week on each of the contracts. If a student feels, however, that he needs more practice in a particular area, then he can finish the contract in whatever time it takes him. The importance of the contracts, when used this way, is twofold: (1) students become familiar with the additional materials available to them in the ESL Clinic or Learning Assistance Center, and (2) they are given training in handling self-programmed materials.

In using a syllabus such as the one used by UCD a teacher can proceed in structuring class lessons and activities as best fits each group of students. In the UCD classes, the first skill presented is note-taking in lectures because it is immediately essential to academic survival. Despite the harriedness of every first day in class (confusion always abounds with presentation of the syllabus, description of the class expectations, introduction of the ESL Clinic staff, etc., compounded by language ineptitude and multiplied by panic), still some 10 to 15 minutes are spent on note-taking because each student needs to know this has been

[1] Interested readers may obtain a copy of this syllabus and related course materials from the author: Tippy Schwabe, Department of English, University of California, Davis, 95616.

identified as an immediate need the ESL class will help with. (He is told to take notes as best he can for the first several class sessions in each course; later class assignments can include working out strategies for making order of what he has heard and recorded.)

The following procedure is used in teaching this skill. First the component parts of it are identified:

1. Main ideas, as differentiated from supporting details, must be understood in the vertical organization of ideas which is intrinsic to expository writing (the factual writing in textbooks).

2. The formal outline framework must be understood as it shows relationships of main ideas to major divisions and supporting details to main ideas, etc.

3. The use of key words, rather than whole sentences, must be incorporated in note-taking/outlining.

4. This, in turn, involves understanding of content words (nouns, verbs, adjectives in this context) and relationship words (transitional words, adverbs, prepositions in this context).

In the first class period, a formal outline pattern (see app. 1) is handed out and the concept of the organization of ideas inherent in factual English lecturing and writing is very briefly discussed. The visual aid to understanding relationships which indenting in an outline provides is explained. Sometimes note is made of the vertical nature of expository writing/lecturing (ruling out the irrelevant) and the great use of subordination, as well as coordination, in English. Sometimes this is introduced later, but whenever it is presented, it is stressed again and again through the term. However, little time is given to explanation in the first period. Instead, a short lecture is given on a subject of immediate and common concern to all, and while the lecture is given, the lecturer outlines it on the blackboard using key words. (At UCD this lecture is an explanation of the academic hierarchy in an American university: academic titles of professor, associate professor, assistant professor, lecturer, teaching associate, teaching assistant, etc.; kinds of responsibilities each has in teaching and research; length of appointments; etc.) While this information is important and of interest in understanding life within the university, the main purpose is to demonstrate that a well-organized lecture does follow an outlinable pattern.

In the second class period, a partially filled in outline is distributed to the class. Again, a formal lecture is given and the students fill in the outline of the lecture as it is given. (At UCD, this lecture treats the subject of note-taking itself: the purposes of note-taking, the varieties of note-taking, and special suggestions for individualizing notes for specific courses. Although this would be worthwhile to present in the first period, it needs to be covered more thoroughly than the introductory period permits. Also, the students need to have experimented with some note-taking themselves in the first two days of classes to judge the relevancy of the ideas suggested in the lecture.) Immediately following the formal presentation in the ESL class, a copy of the full outline the lecture followed is distributed so the student can see how close to the model his own attempt at filling in the partial outline came. This lecture demonstrates that with well-organized speakers it is possible to understand the relationships of ideas as they lecture, and this is pointed out. The concept of "key words" in the outline is discussed in this lesson too, with a review of what kinds of words most often constitute the idea words. Note is paid to the adverbs

in outlines usually suggesting temporal, spatial, cause/effect/result, etc. relationships.

In the third class period, students are asked to review the formal outline pattern by writing the outline form at the beginning of the class period. They then check each other's recall against the formal outline pattern using the first lesson's model outline to correct details such as the movement from letters to numbers, use of periods, and indenting to show relationship of ideas. Parentheses are noted as signals for very minor supporting details. Following this review of the outline pattern itself, the students take notes on a class lecture, covering the SQ3R technique (presented in detail in *Effective Study*. Francis P. Robinson. New York: Harper & Row, 1946). They are told to take running notes, but if they can sense any organizational pattern suggested by the lecturer, they are asked to incorporate these cues into the running notes. After this lecture, an outline is done as a group activity on the front blackboard. Again a copy of the completed outline is given to each at the end of the lesson.

In the next lessons, the marginal outlines in one of the assigned texts are pointed out. (In Campbell and Ballou, marginal key words and variation in type script and intensity correlate with an outline of the contents presented at the beginning of each chapter.) Short mini-lectures of two to five minutes are often given. (Unit 8 of Joan Morley's *Listening Comprehension*, University of Michigan Press, if talked rather than read, is excellent for such short lectures.) In such short material it is usually not possible to see organizational patterns (as it sometimes isn't in longer lectures) so students must take running notes. Afterwards, however, main ideas and supporting details can be deciphered through two or three comprehension questions. Then a short outline can be worked out. On some occasions, only one task is done in a period, but students need to be taught that they can (indeed, they must) rework running lecture notes later to organize the material in some fashion.

Through the term, the skills of differentiating main divisions and ideas from supporting details and outlining are practiced in some way almost every period. Whenever introductory information or explanatory materials about another skill is given to the class, students take notes as if this were a lecture, and they are tested for comprehension or outlines immediately afterwards. As skills increase, the outlining is sometimes done orally rather than on the blackboard.

At the same time the outline is used in other class activities, particularly writing during class under the pressure of time. While the primary focus here is on writing various kinds of mock exam questions, this is an instance of how a skill learned as a component of one activity can be used in another. In the first in-class writing assignments, a short outline is always provided for the paragraph which has to be written in five (to ten) minutes. Next, only the topic sentence/idea is provided and the student must contribute key words and supporting details before writing the paragraph in class. The end exercise, of course, is to have the student do a complete outline on his own before he writes the in-class paragraph(s). Through the term, too, he is working on a long, detailed outline for the out-of-class reference paper which is required at the end of the term. So the skill is practiced and refined in several activities.

In such ways, each skill in the syllabus is introduced, integrated with assigned texts, and reinforced through practice during the term. By the end of the ten-week quarter, most students at UCD have made substantial progress in all skill areas so they are able to carry a full academic load with no further ESL work per se. Some do continue to need more work, of course. In the latter group, some choose to work on their own, confident they have the methodology and

awareness of resources to increase their control of these skills. Others opt to work on self-programmed materials in the ESL Clinic or at the Learning Assistance Center. Some go on to a second ESL class. But all, however, indicate gratefulness for the training in the skills taught the first term, for they know absolutely that their academic survival depends upon them.

Appendix 1

The Formal Outline

Title

I. Major division

A.
B. Main ideas
C.

1. Major supporting details
2.

a.
b.
c.

1.)
2.)

a.)
b.)

(1.)
(2.)

(a.)
(b.)

Minor supporting details

3.

D.

1.

a.
b.
c.

2.

II. Major division

etc.

Notes:

1. A 3 or 4 paragraph essay usually has only one division/topic.
2. A chapter in a book is likely to have several major divisions.
3. A paragraph will often be one main idea (A, B, C, etc.) developed with various kinds of supporting detail.
4. Indenting shows relationship of ideas. For example, in D. the points a, b, & c are details referring to point 1; they do not explain point 2 under D.
5. A summary will include major divisions (I, II, etc.) and main ideas (A, B, C, etc.)
6. A paraphrase will include major divisions, main ideas and major supporting details as well.

Vocabulary:

Roman numeral:	(I, II, III, etc.)
Capital letters:	(A, B, C, D, etc.)
Small letters:	(a, b, c, d, etc.)
Parenthesis:	(plural: parentheses; definition: round brackets)
Indent:	(starting a line of writing/printing further in from the margin than the other lines)
Summary:	(a brief account giving the chief points)
Paraphrase:	(a restatement of the meaning of a piece of writing; key vocabulary, particularly names/nouns, can be identical but sentence structures must be different)

APPENDIX #2

Some Useful Materials for Academic Skills Development Classes/Programs

Study Skills for Students of ESL. Richard Yorkey. McGraw-Hill, 1970.

Developed for ESL students at the American University of Beirut, Lebanon. Includes work on making a study schedule, forming words, outlining, reading, taking notes, using a library, using a dictionary, preparing for exams. Good suggested activities and practice work in each area. No answers included, so is limited in usefulness in self-programmed work.

Quest: Academic Skills Program. Cohen, et al. Harcourt, Brace, Javanovich, 1973.

Developed for native-speakers of English at the University of Michigan Reading Improvement Center. Through analytical questions, students work on skills in reading, listening, and note-taking, preparing for exams, composition writing and self-management. Completely self-instructional. Was field-tested with high school, community college and university-level students.

McGraw-Hill Basic Skills System. 1969.

A series of texts designed for native speakers of English at the University of Minnesota Reading and Study Skills Center. Aimed at college-bound high school students and junior college students. Tests determine instructional needs in each book and materials are designed to meet these needs. Especially useful in self-instructional programs are:

Reading for the Main Idea. Alton Raygor.

Exercises involve identification of the main purpose of paragraphs, recognition of supporting details and irrelevant detail. All exercises are taken from textbooks.

Reading to Discover Organization. Joseph Fisher.

Provides training and practice in recognizing organizational patterns in expository writing. Passages are taken from text books. Exercises are built around outlining and summarizing techniques.

Skimming and Scanning Improvement. Martha Maxwell.

Provides long readings on one side of a double-fold book with skimming (reading for special purpose) and scanning (reading to locate facts quickly) exercises linked to the reading on the other side of the fold. Articles in social sciences and science are included, as well as bibliographies and indexes for scanning.

Paragraph Patterns. Programmed by Blair Barrett.

Assumes students have ability to write complete sentences. Gives practice in writing topic sentences and development (of the topic) sentences and then organizing them into paragraphs. Exercises in re-writing and editing included.

American English: Guided Composition. Florence Baskoff. Didier International: Philadelphia, 1971. (Part of the series *American English: An Integrated Series for International Students.)*

Developed for use with ESL speakers. Can be used in conjunction with the other materials in the series or alone. Lessons arranged in order of difficulty, following this format: (1) a model composition, (2) vocabulary and common expressions, (3) grammatical points, (4) an outline of the model composition, (5) additional expressions, (6) quizes (usually the model paragraph with deleted words A short handbook at the end is valuable. Especially useful for working with outlines, moving from outline to essay or vice versa.

The Turning Point in Reading. Doris Wilcox Gilbert. Prentice-Hall, 1969.

Intended for native-English-speaking young adults and upward, but extremely usable in ESL classes, clinics, extension and adult education centers. Not written for students who text well by college standards. Treats all areas of reading skills. Includes progress charts, answers to exercises, and suggestions for materials for out-of-class practice. Also includes a useful list of reading tests commercially available and references on: (1) books about books, (2) books about words, (3) books about study, (4) high school and easy adult manuals, and (5) books and magazines for reading teachers.

Power and Speed in Reading. Doris Wilcox Gilbert. Prentice Hall, 1954, 1965

Intended for American college students, business and professional adults, but very useful with ESL students. Provides exercises to improve the mechanical skills of reading and develop the secondary skills and habits of thought essential to efficient reading at higher levels. Includes a list of high level standardized reading tests, as well as tests for the student using the book to take. Exercises in various skill areas included. Answers to exercises given.

Breaking the Reading Barrier. Doris Wilcox Gilbert. Prentice-Hall, 1959

Designed for use in American reading classes, clinics, special freshman groups and adult education classes. It is not intended for good readers or severely handicapped readers. Exercises and tests in all reading skill areas. Answers are included in an appendix. Difficult for university-level ESL students, but very profitable when managed.

Reading, Thinking, Writing: A Text for Students of ESL. Mary S. Lawrence. University of Michigan Press, 1975.

Designed to teach ESL students how to read carefully and accurately to acquire information and how to write logically and coherently. Exercises focus on ability to make extrapolations and inferences, to manipulate data in some ordered way, and to synthesize data. Lessons are presented in workbook format and sequenced in difficulty. A wide variety of exercises and class activities are included.